

## Societal Assessment (Subject Editor: David Hunkeler)

### Societal Assessment –

### A New Subject Area and Call for Papers

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#### The Need for, and Opportunity of, a New Subject Area 'Social Assessment' for Int J LCA

In a recent editorial [1], Gerald Rebitzer and I noted that "It is clear that the assessment of the social aspects of all elements of the life cycle is a critical future issue for life cycle approaches in general". We recommended "a methodological basis for the assessment of social aspects of a product life cycle" and that "the conceptual basis of LCA can, probably, be used for societal assessments".

Int J LCA clearly has a lead role in the development and proliferation of LCA thinking and applications and, as such, it can become the vehicle for LCA-compatible societal assessments if it:

- establishes a *systematic method* which makes a firm recommendation on mid-point versus end-point indicators
- manages a *list of social indicators* (now over 200) provides a transparent means for their *validation*
- scientifically resolves the idea of **thresholds** in regards to the aforementioned indicators

**Social Assessment** is, rather, likely to be based on mid-point indicators, whereas one might refer to a **Societal Assessment** as more macroeconomic and hence end-point based. If one were to insist on a product perspective, with a cradle-to-gate framework, using system boundaries and functional units compatible with LCA, then I believe Int J LCA is the most suitable place to discuss and develop the third pillar of sustainability (along with environmental LCA and economical LCC).

#### 'Social Assessment' as a Sub-Topic

I would propose that Int J LCA make a 'Call for Papers' in the March issue for 'Social Assessment' work, and, thereby, take the leadership in product-based social assessments. We should not restrict potential authors in regards to the scope of their submissions as the field is an evolving one. However, one should insist on a relatively limited set of criteria which include:

- Product<sup>1</sup>-based cradle to gate perspective
- System boundaries to compatible with Environmentally-based LCIA and the economic complement Environmental-LCC
- Appropriate definition of a functional unit
- Transparent definition of sub-threshold deleted indicators

The general editorial issues associated with articles would correspond to those in Int J LCA such as brevity, clearly stating assumptions and the performance of sensitivity analyses.

#### Call for Papers

The Publisher Editor, as well as the authors of this editorial, kindly ask for submissions in the general area of Societal Assessment. Such potential articles could include, though are not limited to:

- Assessments from a product-perspective which complement LCIA with societal metrics (mid-point indicators)

<sup>1</sup> Products clearly also include services by the most accepted definitions in Int J LCA.



- Portfolio presentations which represent studies comparing the environmental LCIA, or an economically-based LCC with key societal indicators or aggregated metrics (end-points)
- Articles discussing the merit of mid-versus-end-point indicators in Social Assessment
- Articles developing the methodology of Social Assessment
- Reviews of existing studies which have included Social Assessments, if not per se, as part of the results presented
- Expansions of previously published LCA cases to include Social Assessments
- Discussions of thresholds with respect to mid-point Social indicators
- Proposals for 'screening' Social Assessment as well as its validation
- Articles discussing the pros and cons of normalization in Social Assessments

#### Reference

- [1] Hunkeler D, Rebitzer G (2005): The Future of Life Cycle Assessment. Int J LCA 10 (5) 305 – 308 (2005)

David Hunkeler

AQUA+TECH Specialties, Switzerland  
([david.hunkeler@aquaplustech.ch](mailto:david.hunkeler@aquaplustech.ch))

#### Societal Aspects in Int J LCA

Social Indicators for Sustainable Project and Technology  
Life Cycle Management in the Process Industry  
Labuschagne, Carin; Brent, Alan  
11 Int J LCA (1) 3–15 (2006)

A Framework for Social Life Cycle Impact Assessment  
Dreyer, Louise; Hauschild, Michael; Schierbeck, Jens  
11 Int J LCA (2) 88–97 (2006)

Expanded Damage Function of Stratospheric Ozone Depletion  
to Cover Major Endpoints Regarding LCIA  
Hayashi, Kentaro; Nakagawa, Ai; Itsubo, Norihiro; Inaba, Atsushi  
OnlineFirst: DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1065/lca2004.11.189>

Life-Cycle Based Methods for Sustainable Product Development  
Klöpper, Walter  
8 Int J LCA (3) 157–159 (2003)

Social and Environmental Life Cycle Assessment (SELCA).  
Approach and Methodological Development  
O'Brian, Martin; Doig, Alison; Clift, Roland  
1 Int J LCA (4) 231–237 (1996)